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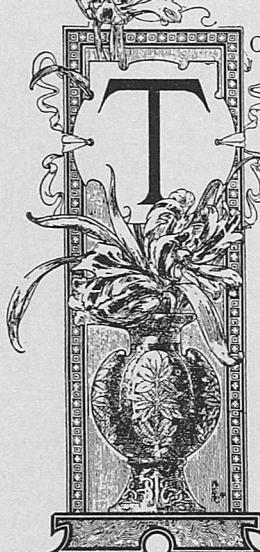
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# DECORATIVE TEXTILE FABRICS



LACE AT THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION. IRISH LACE EXHIBITED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF LADY ABERDEEN.

BY HESTER M. POOLE.



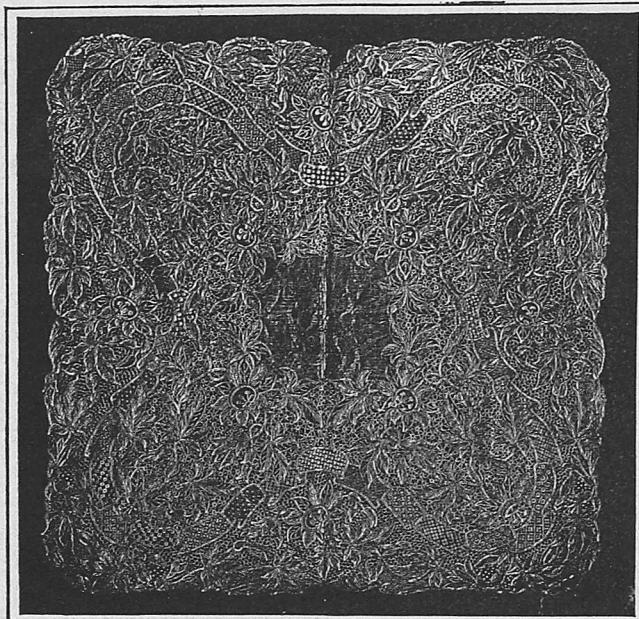
O the inventor of lace, the lover of grace and beauty owes an inestimable debt of gratitude. For its soft foldings, its requisite floriations, its endless variety of form and fabric, there are countless uses in the toilet and in a multitude of rich furnishings.

When a stocking weaver of Nottingham produced the first lace-making machine in the year 1768, he unwittingly brought great distress upon the tens of thousands of poor people in Great Britain and upon the continent. Lace became cheapened, hand-work fell into disuse, and in many places, notably in Ireland, the very process of manufacture was lost in the death of old lace-makers, then thrown out of employment.

This did not occur until 1809 and after. At that date an Englishman perfected machinery that had been suggested by that used in the making of fishing nets. In this, a Jacquard apparatus attached to the lace-loom works upon the foundation of bobbinet lace, the figures that are made out of thread either coarser or finer than that. The inventiveness of American genius has elaborated and perfected the process, so that filmy and delicate laces, woven out of cotton, silk or linen, are now within the reach of all but the extremely poor.

But here, as in all other vocations, hand-work counts. At one glance a cultured eye detects and ignores the work of the soulless machine. That slight irregularity which always pro-

has a character which is beyond the art of the machine. For the same reason the Oriental rug is more precious than the product of the western loom.



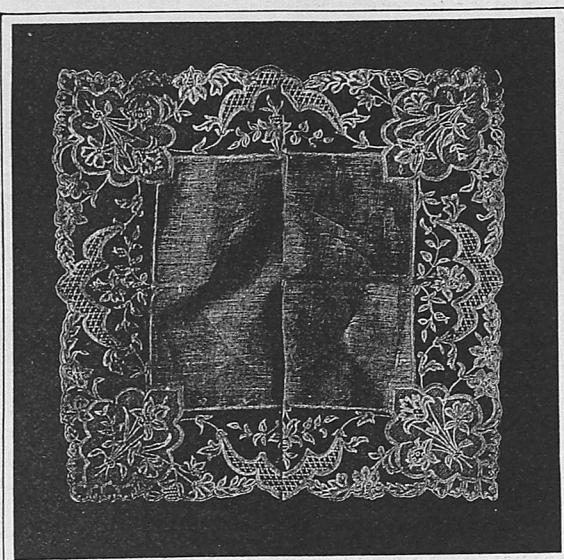
CORPORAL VEIL IN FLAT NEEDLEPOINT LACE. FROM THE PRESENTATION CONVENT INDUSTRY, YOUGHAL, COUNTY CORK. DESIGNED IN THE CONVENT SCHOOL OF ART.

During the last three centuries fine laces have been used as an adjunct of the toilet, where before it was chiefly employed as a church or altar decoration. From Italy the knowledge of its manufacture passed to France. Germany and Flanders next learned the secret of point lace making, and Belgium is now the special home of this beautiful fabric. Two centuries ago it sped across the channel and the poor of England and Ireland learned how to fashion webs so exquisite, that royalty itself was proud to be married in a robe so incomparably fine and delicate. In lowly thatched cottages, in dim damp cellars, kept damp to prevent the breaking of the slender brittle thread, lace slowly grew under the weak fingers and half blind eyes of those workers who, in all their lives, never saw anything of the magnificence they had helped to embellish.

After the introduction of machine lace and especially after several financial depressions that occurred during the early part of the century, the lace makers of Ireland gradually lost their employment. It was only a dozen years ago that two or three English women, notably Mrs. Ernest Hart and Lady Aberdeen, with a desire to help the women of that impoverished country, sought to revive the making of fine lace. With what success their efforts met, two curious Irish villages in the Columbian Exposition give evidence.

Of a certain fine stitch greatly admired, but the secret of which seemed lost, it was found that one obscure old woman alone remembered how it was made. She managed to impart a knowledge of the process to a few bright young women, and this added to those modes of manufacture which had maintained a precarious holding, formed the nucleus of what promises to be a flourishing trade. Such is the outlook in those Irish villages where women of taste and wealth are daily spending large sums in the purchase of Irish lace.

On entering the village established by Lady Aberdeen, the philanthropic wife of the new Governor-General of Canada, we



HANDKERCHIEF, TAMBOUR LACE. FROM CONVENT OF MERCY INDUSTRY, KINSALE. DESIGNED BY MISS ANDERSON, CORK SCHOOL OF ART.

ceeds from whatever is wrought, even under the worst conditions, by man or woman, is precious in any handsome fabric. How much more so when it is made by an expert. Even faulty work

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seem to have been spirited across the ocean and set down in a typical Irish village. Here are low-browed thatched cottages, filled with rosy-cheeked maidens at work at the dairy and at various kinds of lace, from the 25 cent torchon to the \$100.00 per yard point aiguille. Their fingers fairly fly among the bobbins or with the needle, and we are compelled to ask them to work slowly in order that we may understand how it is done.

Strictly speaking there are two kinds of hand lace, each subdivided into many varieties, the needle-point lace and the bobbin lace. In these Irish villages are expert workers in both. In the one case the needle flies swiftly under the light touch of the maiden, in the other the click of the bobbins as they weave in and out in apparently inextricable confusion, but in reality following a marked pattern, fairly bewilders the onlooker. In both cases no net is used as a foundation. The entire texture is fabricated by the needle and the bobbins.

The Irish point, which is similar to Point Alençon, the most costly and complicated of all laces, is made over a pattern that is stitched to a piece of coarse linen. The outline is then defined by threads couched or fixed by small stitches passed by another needle and thread through both paper and lining. This fixes and outlines the pattern and receives a permanent edge.

The fine half open ground is then wrought in a kind of buttonhole stitch, the thread being thrown over the left hand and drawn up near the outline but not touching it. Each successive stitch is even with the first, and the perfection of the work depends on this evenness. At the extremity of the pattern the stitch turns upon itself and goes back in the same way, each bar cutting the length in half. That weaves the open needle-point. To make a solid section like the leaf or flower in a needle lace, the same buttonhole stitch is taken over a thread drawn parallel with the longer side of the pattern. Another long parallel bar is drawn close to the former and the stitches are taken over that in the same manner. The process is not hard; the stitch is simplicity itself.

But the materials are so fine and delicate, the work so tedious, the danger of unevenness so constant, that the labor would be appalling to one not born to patient and unremunerative toil. It can only be carried on in cottages where women have no other resource, and there is plenty of time for slow labor. It is the work of the peasant, and as such, in the present order, it deserves to be fostered. To know how to do it is to be able to pay the rent and provide food for the home.

The bright-faced lassie who taught me her process in the little cabin, a reproduction of an original, even to the alcove with a bed at one side, had been at work during two and a half years before she became the expert she now is.

These lace makers are also skillful in making a wonderfully fine tatting in various wheels, whorls, discs and floriations, that is counted as a kind of lace. Then there is a Clonas crochet,

a flat kind that is specially effective for broad collars and cuffs. Upon certain occasions no dress is more effective than an elegant fitting, simply made dark frock with edgings at the neck and wrist of Clonas crochet, as well as in those of richer lace such as Rembrandt and Vandyke and Teniers liked so well to paint. Besides them a modern fashion looks common enough.

The raised crochet, the Newcross, is still more effective, as a raised figure gives greater richness of appearance. The beauty of these crocheting is apparent when it is stated that a Clonas lace hardly five inches wide and made out of lustrous silk, is held to be worth at least \$55.00 per yard.

Pillow or bobbin lace, wrought in an adjoining thatched cottage is either worked on one piece on a cushion, or in separate flowers that are connected with long wrought stitches designated as bridges or "brides." This hard pillow, made on round boards, is held on the knees of the lace maker, and on it is fastened a strip of paper pricked with holes to indicate the pattern. Through each aperture is stuck a pin, around which the thread of the bobbin is twisted or braided.

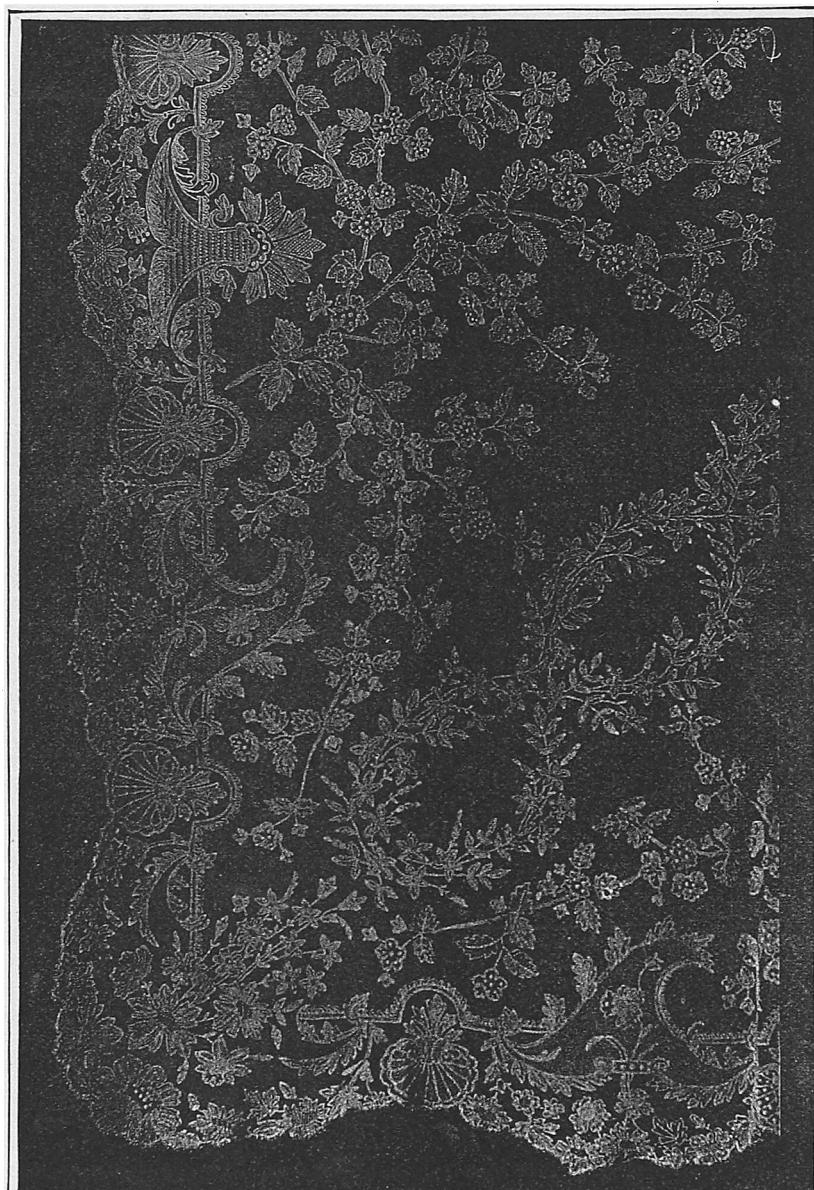
The thread for the lace is now wound on bobbins—small pieces of wood or bone. A large number of these are needed, from 50 to 1,200, according to the width of the lace. Those not immediately in use hang over the front of the cushion, each by its own thread, which is looped so as not to become unwound. The dexterous worker now weaves them to one side and another, in and out, twisting and crossing, and accomplishing a good amount of work each day. Sometimes a portion of the pattern is traced in pale blue or faint pink. Usually it is of linen and is pure white. An expert can make three-fourths of a yard per day of lace nearly or quite three inches wide.

In the salesroom of the Irish village are shown a great variety of laces, all made by the dexterous fingers of the maidens of the Emerald Isle. Among the most showy is the Limerick lace. In this variety the net is stretched in a frame and the outline firmly button-holed or "tight-stitched," as that process is designated. The figure is then finely darned, back and forth.

One variety of this, fine as a cobweb, a kind of blonde lace, sells for a scarf length, half a yard in width, at \$38.00 the piece. This variety is suitable for large articles, such as veils and flounces.

A point applique, made with the needle in sections and then joined together, consisting of a bride's veil, fan, flounce and handkerchief, was valued at \$1,200, and for the price asked shows a remarkable amount of work. There was also a sideboard scarf, two and a half yards long, of linen, with needle-point insertions and finish upon the ends, upon which was boldly defined the eagle and the harp, significant of the union of the States and Ireland. This is considered worth \$200.00.

In this exhibit are shown a quantity of richly embroidered priestly vestments, finished with colors and bullion, and of altar lace, chiefly the Limerick. Some of the latter come as high as



BRIDAL VEIL, "SILK TAMBOUR." WORKED BY DEAF MUTES, ST. MARY'S DOMINICAN CONVENT, CABRA, DUBLIN. DESIGNED BY MISS JACOB, DUBLIN SCHOOL OF ART.

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\$50.00 per yard. There was also much drawn work. Some of it, the drawn centres wrought in various handsome patterns, were finished with rich colored embroidery upon the broad edges. In fact, priestly vestments are here at a premium. On them are lavished the choicest of handiwork.

In all these beautiful things the shamrock, the harp and other graceful reminders of Erin, are interspersed.

Carrickmacross lace, which has become universally celebrated, is here made in a variety of patterns. It is an applique of muslin upon plain Brussels net. The pattern is outlined with No. 60 American thread and that is buttonholed with thread No. 200—that is a thread of exceeding fineness. The petals are then outlined and buttonholed in the same manner. After all is done, the muslin is carefully cut away, leaving the appliqued figures.

The exhibit of lace in the Women's Building is fine and complete. Among designs are found flowers of all kinds, birds, bees, lambs and the deer. In the Duchess of Abercorn's section is much tambour lace. Some extremely good designs show the rose and the shamrock.

Other nations, beside the Irish, show admirable handiwork. The court train of Point Alençon belonging to the Queen of Belgium, is a marvel of beauty. Above the edge is a row of shields containing coats of arms of various cities of the dominion, each surmounted by a crown. The shields measured some four inches by six. Below was an elegant border of roses and leaves. Above twined a rose-vine, tapering upward to the top of the train. Upon this royal robe were expended years of labor.

In the exhibit of the Compagnie des Indes is an overdress of point applique in ferns and roses that is very beautiful. There are also garnitures of lace lilies of the valley, each solid leaf bearing a stem of flowers. Another, a long scarf, showed an eighteenth century king and queen on a pedestal in a bower of palms and roses, the pedestal enwreathed with shields and banners. One simulated ribbon on the net, from which hung roses and lovers knots. In fact, all sorts of whims and conceits are here enwrought. For instance, a Point Alençon, so fine as to almost need a magnifying glass to distinguish the threads, shows clusters of clover with its leaves, fastened with streamers of ribbon, all in rarely beautiful point.

Among the point lace fans was one in black, containing a landscape in petto. Here was a castle with towers, boat and drawbridge and fishermen with their nets, beside a pond, all surrounded by a graceful border of scrolls and flowers.

One of the finest of all exhibits is made by Mme. de Ker-

strat, who has notable reproductions of that famous Venetian point which monarchs used to covet. No more wonderful lace than this was ever made. Among other pieces are a Venetian lace screen, lined with dull green silk, which finely displays the pattern. It can be purchased for a trifle of \$1,600. There is also an elegant set of bay window draperies entirely made by the needle, at the estimated value of \$6,000, and long curtains of Arabian lace in which the convolvulus pattern is appliqued on silk. In this, needle and bobbin are both used. The real Mirecourt lace is here shown in all its beauty, some specimens containing all the different open-work stitches that can be produced by the needle. One which attracts more attention than any other is a bed-spread, a remarkably lovely reproduction of that which once graced the chamber of the unfortunate queen, Marie Antoinette.

The finest pillow lace is the Valenciennes, which is manufactured only in France and Belgium. It is an even lace, the same sized threads forming both ground-work and figure. Of late years it has been less a favorite than it was in former days. Other pillow laces that will always be admirably and artistically decorative are the black Chantilly, chiefly made at Bayeux, and the black and the white blonde. Sometimes the latter is made by appliqueing pillow-made figures to silk net.

Lace will always be used in draperies as well as an accessory to the toilet. In France alone no less than 250,000 women are employed in its manufacture.

## DRAPERY NOTES.

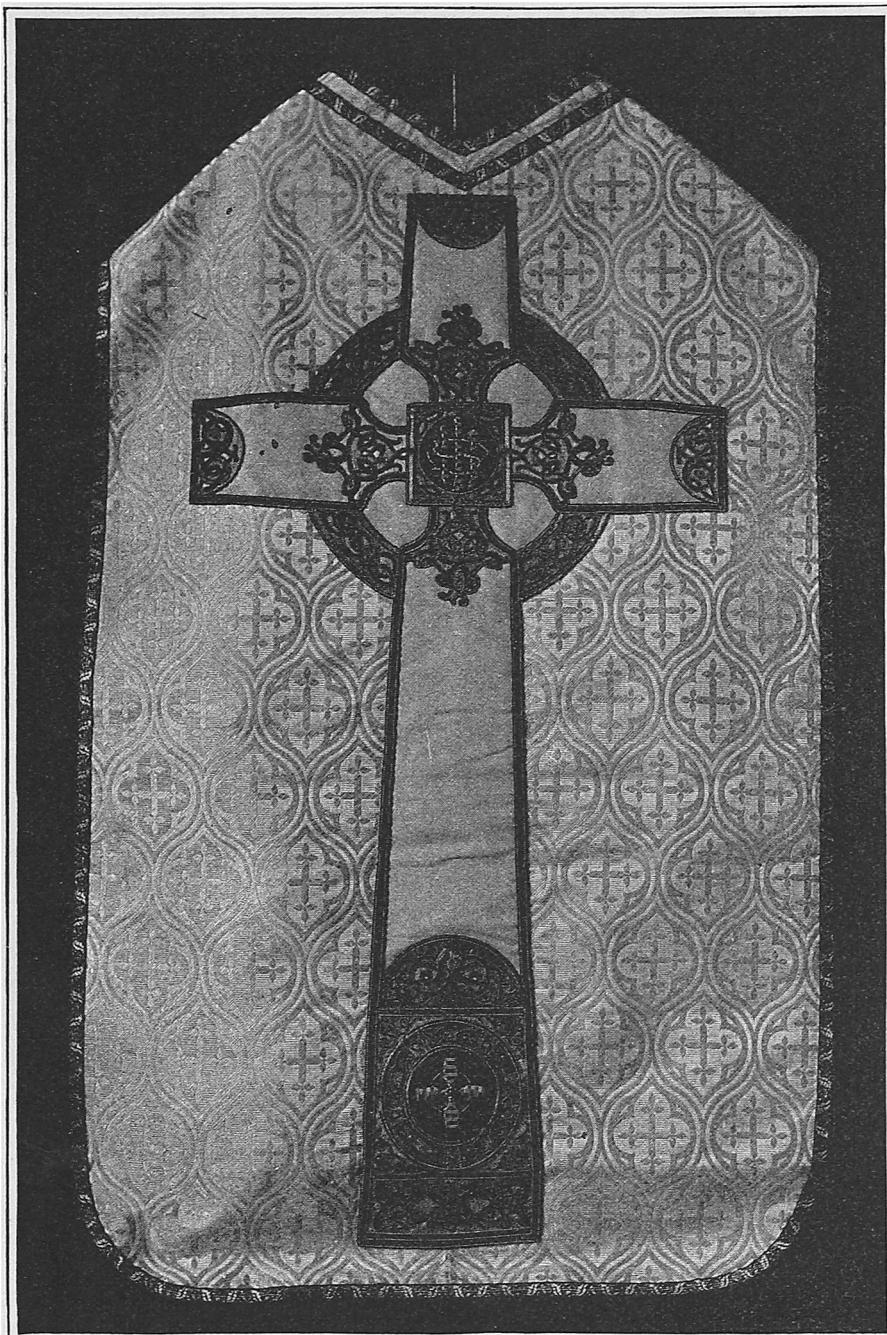
PREMISING a drawing-room be furnished in the Renaissance style, there is nothing more suitable than handsome Swiss embroidered net curtains in the same character of design. We also suggest delicate shades of Madras muslins, trimmed with fringe or lace, or curtains of the same texture with borders and dados.

NOTTINGHAM, or Scotch lace curtains, are generally considered more suitable for bedrooms than other makes, on account of their lightness, and the new Brussels effects in these makes are very desirable.

THE water-level highway between the East and West, "America's Greatest Railroad," the New York Central.

WORLD'S Fair Special—favorite train for Chicago, via New York Central. No extra fare.

UP the Hudson in the early morning on the Empire State Express is one of the most delightful railroad rides in the world.



VESTMENT, "CELTIC" DESIGN, SILK AND GOLD EMBROIDERY. FROM CONVENT OF POOR CLARES INDUSTRY, KENMARE, COUNTY KERRY. MADE TO THE ORDER OF CARDINAL GIBBONS.